

COUNCIL
18 JULY 2024

DARLINGTON COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2027

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

**Responsible Director -
Chief Officers Executive**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the outcome of the public consultation and a revised Council Plan for approval.

Summary

2. On the 5 March 2024 Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on the draft Council Plan. The consultation ran from 6 March to 25 April 2024. Social media promotion reached over 20,000 people, an article on the consultation was included in the One Darlington magazine and members were asked to promote the consultation within their wards. All scrutiny committees considered and supported the draft plan.
3. 315 responses to the survey were received. The summary report of the survey analysis is attached as **Appendix A**. There are some changes to the plan outlined in the main report.
4. The draft plan will be presented to Cabinet on 16th July 2024 with the recommendations to approve and refer to Council for consideration and adoption. Subject to Cabinet's referral, approval is sought on the Council Plan 2024-2027 attached as **Appendix B**. It sets out the long-term ambitions and a vision for Darlington, and priorities for delivery over the life of the plan. Development of the final plan has been informed by the responses to the survey and conversations with stakeholders and residents during the consultation period.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that Council:-
 - (a) Note and consider the outcome of the consultation (Appendix A)
 - (b) Approve the revised Council Plan 2024-27 (Appendix B)

Reason

6. The recommendations are supported as the Council Plan is the strategic document that sets out the council's long term ambitions for Darlington and shorter-term priorities and

actions. Approval of the plan is needed to provide guidance to the organisation, and clarity for the public and our partners on the Council’s strategic priorities.

Chief Officers Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Lynne Davies 5070

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Council Plan prioritises the safety of our residents and communities. The Communities Priority identifies key actions that we will deliver in partnership. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome.
Health and Wellbeing	The Council Plan prioritises the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities. The Health and Wellbeing Priority identifies many actions and good health will be an important outcome across the plan. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome improving health and reducing health inequalities.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The Council Plan prioritises addressing carbon impact and climate change. Addressing climate change is a core principle and will be considered in everything the council does. The performance monitoring framework will include measures to demonstrate progress against this outcome.
Diversity	Addressing inequalities is a core principle within the plan. A desktop Equality Impact Assessment has not identified any significant negative impacts on protected characteristics. The key deliverables referenced in the plan will be progressed through other strategies and plans and will involve separate equality impact assessments where appropriate.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Whole Population
Budget and Policy Framework	The Council plan will be part of the policy framework and will be the primary strategy against which strategies and plans demonstrate their contribution. Specifically to the Council Plan core principles, vision, ambition, and priorities.
Key Decision	The Council plan is part of the policy framework with Cabinet recommending that Council approve the Council Plan.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Council Plan	This is the Council Plan 2024-27 proposed for adoption.
Efficiency	The draft Council Plan prioritises efficient and effective resources as a core principle and will be considered in all council business.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The Council remains committed to ensuring the best outcomes for Looked After Children and contains a number of priority actions that will have a positive impact on this group.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The Council Plan outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the Council and Council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions, and shaping delivery.
8. Cabinet approved the draft plan for consultation at the 5 March 2024 meeting and a public consultation ran from 6 March to 25 April 2024. The purpose was to raise awareness of the draft plan and seek views. A survey was developed that could be completed online, and paper copies were made available at the Dolphin Centre, Cockerton Library and Darlington Library. They were also available upon request and via a specific email address.
9. A communications plan was implemented to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage as much feedback as possible. Detailed stakeholder engagement was carried out alongside this. Key elements of this work included:
 - (a) An article in the One Darlington magazine
 - (b) Regular promotion on the Council's social media channels reaching over 20,000 people, including the use of videos
 - (c) Meetings with key stakeholders
 - (d) All Councillors were given the opportunity to be briefed so they could raise awareness of the plan and consultation with their residents and networks
 - (e) Coverage of the plan and consultation in local press: the Northern Echo on 7th March 2024 and Darlington and Stockton Times on 8th March 2024.
10. All scrutiny committees considered the draft plan in their April 2024 meetings, during the consultation period, and supported the plan.
11. 315 responses to the survey were received over the consultation period. Responses were received from every ward in Darlington and every age category aged 84 and under.
12. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the Core Values, all 315 people answered this question:
 - (a) 60% agreed with *Addressing Inequalities*
 - (b) 53% agreed with *Tackling Climate Change*
 - (c) 73% agreed with *Efficient and Effective use of Resources*.
13. 252 people answered the question on their views of the three long term ambitions:
 - (a) *Inclusive and Sustainable Economy*: 64% agreed and 11% disagreed
 - (b) *Living Well and Staying Healthy*: 75% agreed and 7% disagreed
 - (c) *Thriving Places and Connected Communities*: 67% agreed and 10% disagreed

14. 303 people answered the question on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the vision:
 - (a) 46% agreed
 - (b) 24% neither agreed or disagreed
 - (c) 29% disagreed
 - (d) 2% didn't know

15. Survey respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the six priorities in the plan, 269 people answered this question:
 - (a) *Economy*: 81% agreed and 5% disagreed
 - (b) *Homes*: 70% agreed and 17% disagreed
 - (c) *Living Well*: 77% agreed and 8% disagreed
 - (d) *Children and Young People*: 77% agreed and 6% disagreed
 - (e) *Communities*: 77% agreed and 7% disagreed
 - (f) *Environment*: 78% agreed and 10% disagreed.

16. Respondents were asked to identify up to three actions most important to them for each of the six priorities: economy; homes; living well; children and young people; communities and environment. The results are available in Appendix A. Also summarised in the Appendix are answers to the question on what people hope for the future of Darlington. 177 comments were received on this question and grouped into themes.

17. Overall, the plan has been well received, and of the 232 people who responded to the question on how they feel about the plan overall:
 - (a) 44% agreed or strongly agreed with the plan
 - (b) 35% neither agreed nor agreed
 - (c) 21% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

18. These responses have provided valuable insight, but it should be noted that 315 although a good response is not a representative sample, and so cannot be seen as the view of the overall population. More analysis of the survey is provided at Appendix A.

19. There are some changes in the final plan, key changes below:
 - (a) We have added the word sustainable to the vision, so it now reads: *Darlington is one of the best places to live, learn, work, and invest in the UK with a strong and sustainable economy, healthy thriving communities, and opportunities for all*
 - (b) We have changed the name of Core Values to Core Principles
 - (c) We have changed the name of priority 6 to Local Environment (previously environment), to address comments from the survey and ensure the title reflects the ambition for place-making that includes infrastructure, transport and culture, as well as the natural surroundings

- (d) There is a new action to work effectively with the Darlington Economic Campus to realise the opportunities in the Economy Priority
 - (e) We have added a new section called Our Approach which sets out six core themes: collaboration and partnership working; being data-driven and intelligence-led; embedding core principles in decision-making; delivering through key strategies and plans; modelling our core values in our work and behaviours; and sharing key challenges and celebrating success.
20. As highlighted in the comments in the Council Plan survey there are competing priorities with the need to address inequalities and the impact of climate change at a time of unparalleled financial challenges, and these are recognised.
21. The council plan is attached at Appendix B for Cabinet's consideration and approval. The plan will be illustrated with complementary images and case studies then published on the Darlington Borough Council website following approval.

Financial Implications

22. The Council Plan sets out the vision and long term ambitions for Darlington and will be delivered through the council's key strategies and plans. Any financial implications within these plans will be considered in development and as part of the MTFP and budget setting processes.